

Tessa

the Giant Tortoise



A Galapagos Journey



Galapagos
Conservation
Trust



This book tells the story of a female Galapagos giant tortoise and the journey she makes every year to and from the highlands on her home island of Santa Cruz in the Galapagos Islands.

Along the way, our brave tortoise faces many challenges that she has to overcome. With the help of scientists and the people who live in Galapagos, we are working to protect Tessa and all the other gentle giants on their future migrations. Join Tessa the giant tortoise on her amazing adventure.

For the book to reach a wide audience and to support language learning activities this version is in a bilingual format. Flip the book over to read the story in Spanish.

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Galapagos Conservation Trust is the only UK charity focussed solely on the conservation of the Galapagos Archipelago. We support and deliver impactful projects in Galapagos and respond to key threats facing the Islands, focussing on restoring habitats, conserving species and driving sustainable solutions. By buying this book you are helping to contribute to the overall management of this unique ecosystem.



Galapagos Tortoise Movement Ecology Programme is a multi-institutional collaboration between the Charles Darwin Foundation, the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behaviour, the Galapagos National Park Directorate, the Saint Louis Zoo Institute for Conservation Medicine, the Houston Zoo and Galapagos Conservation Trust.

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During the story look for the  symbol.

A  means there is a challenge ahead for Tessa.

Learn more about the giant tortoises and Galapagos Islands with our activity pack of resources.

Find resources on our Discovering Galapagos Teacher Zone at **discoveringgalapagos.org.uk**

A glowing orange sun rises over the Galapagos **lowlands**. Animals enjoy its warmth.

Tessa the Galapagos giant tortoise munches happily on her breakfast – a delicious cactus pad.

She is 60 years old – young for a giant tortoise.

Look at the shape of her shell.

It is like a dome. She is called a **domed tortoise**.

Tessa shares her island home with many other plants and animals. What species can you find as you read the story?

Can you spot the friendly carpenter bee on each page?



It is October. There has been little rain. The land is dry and food is scarce. Tessa feels a rumble of hunger deep inside her belly.

She must leave for the **highlands** in search of food. There will be plenty to eat there.

Tessa begins her long journey. It is called a **migration**. She has migrated many times before.

Tessa hopes for a safe journey along the old trail she uses every year.

! What can she hear? A noisy road cuts through her **trail**.

She must cross it. The loud cars scare her. She pulls her head into her shell.

Look! The driver has seen Tessa. They slow down to let her pass.

She makes it to the other side. She is safe.

Tessa rests and breathes
a long, slow sigh of relief.

She stretches her
head out of her shell.
Mist covers her dry,
wrinkly skin.



A little finch dances before her.

Why is it doing this?

Tessa knows it wants to feed
on the irritating seeds stuck
to her skin. She lifts up her
giant body to allow it to feed.

Tessa and the little finch
are happy.




She must continue her journey.
She pushes her enormous body
through the **vegetation**.
Seedlings will grow in the
space she has cleared.



❗ The vegetation is
getting dense. It is
hard to get through.

Look! What can Tessa
see? People are clearing
introduced plants that
grow across her trail. Her
pathway is clear again.



Tall trees reach into swirling mists. Bright green mosses cover their branches. Tessa has reached the highlands. Not far to go now.


❗ What can she see? A fence stretches across the field.

How can she get through?

What is the farmer doing?

Look! He is making a gap for tortoises. One of her friends is squeezing through.

Tessa hurries, as much as a tortoise can hurry, across the field. She feels excited about seeing her friends.



At last! Tessa has reached the end of her long journey and her favourite place – the mud pools.

She lowers her tired body into the cool mud. Squelch, squish, splosh! Bliss!

A brightly coloured bird lands on her back. Tessa feels lucky – it is now rare to see these beautiful birds.

She will stay here for a while to enjoy the plentiful food and find a **mate**.



Flash! What is that?
Tourists enjoy watching
the famous tortoises.
Cameras click loudly.

Please keep your
distance from the animals


! What can Tessa see? Colourful
food on the ground. Yum! She
stretches her neck to take a bite and...

Look! A small hand reaches to
take it. It is not food. It is litter.
Where has it come from?

The boy puts it in his pocket. He
will put it in the correct bin later.

February arrives. The
rainy season has begun.
It is time to return to the
lowlands to feast on fresh
plants and fruits.

Tortoises begin to leave.
Tessa watches them plod
slowly along the trail.
She breathes deeply. She
will be sad to leave the pools.

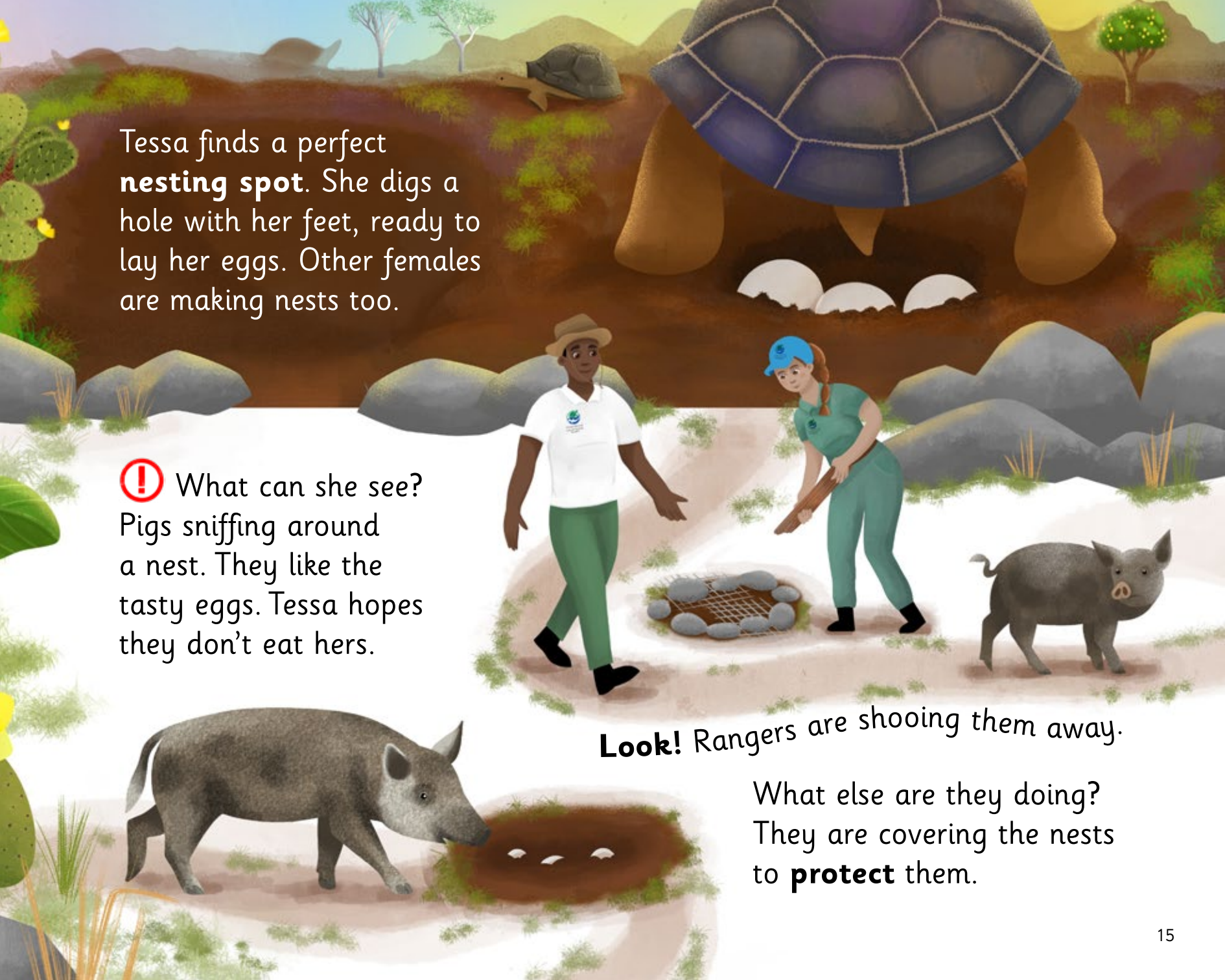


April is here. Tessa has made it back to the lowlands. It looks different than before.

Rains have transformed it into a carpet of fresh green herbs and other plants.

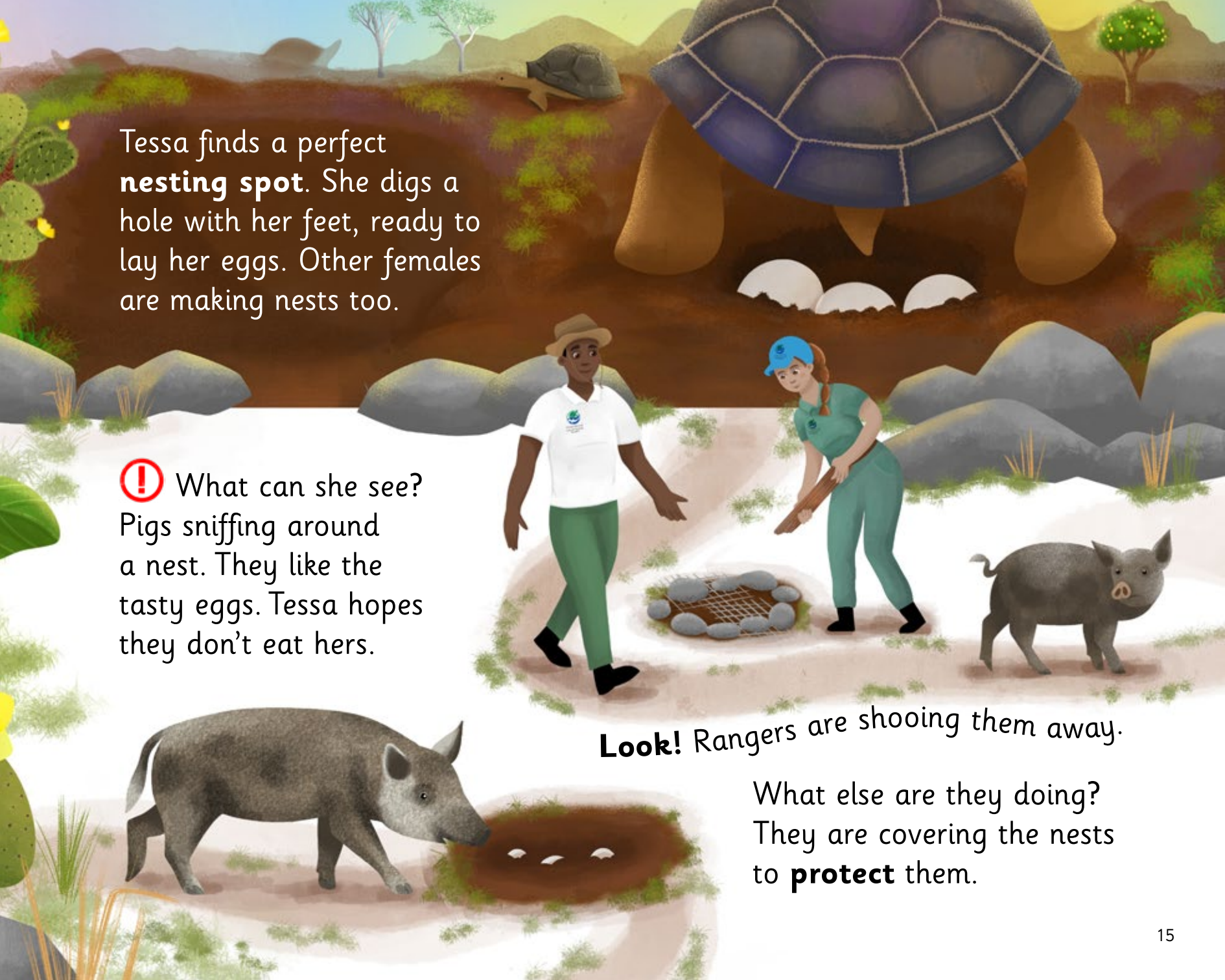
Tessa munches on them greedily. She needs lots of energy to help the eggs growing inside her.

In July she will be ready to lay them – 8 eggs the size of tennis balls!



Tessa finds a perfect **nesting spot**. She digs a hole with her feet, ready to lay her eggs. Other females are making nests too.

❗ What can she see? Pigs sniffing around a nest. They like the tasty eggs. Tessa hopes they don't eat hers.



Look! Rangers are shooing them away.

What else are they doing? They are covering the nests to **protect** them.



A few months later something moves in Tessa's nest.

Look! Hatchlings are emerging. How many can you count?

We don't know much about the first few years of their lives.

What do they do?
Where do they go?

A glowing red sun sets over the lowlands and the next **generation** of giants.

Look how tiny they are!

Can you spot the hatchlings with a **tag** on their back? Scientists have attached them.

The tags will help to **track** the hatchlings movements and answer these questions.

Let's all work together to make sure they can continue their long migrations for many years to come.

We will help protect them along their way. Wish them luck.

✓ RCH3R-09
✓ DBE4A-06

Tortoise Fun Facts

Native

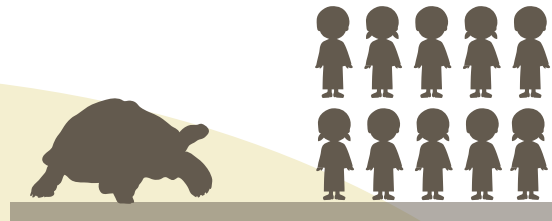
**Galapagos
giant tortoise**

Tortuga gigante de
Galapagos
Chelonoidis spp.



Tortoises in numbers

Galapagos giant tortoises are the largest terrestrial or land reptile on earth, weighing about 250kg, although some can weigh up to 300kg!



An average 8 year old child weighs about 25kg. How many children weigh the same as a giant tortoise? Let's count...



The tortoises can grow up to 1.8m in length. How tall are you?



Measure and compare the difference between you and a giant tortoise!

How long do species live for?

Giant tortoises can live for a very long time, sometimes more than 150 years!

Look at the timeline of the tortoise and compare it to other species you know. Who has the shortest life span? Who has the longest?

What a journey!

Giant tortoises arrived or colonised the Galapagos Islands a long, long time ago, floating all the way across the ocean from the continent of South America!

2-3 MILLION YEARS AGO...

Galapagos Islands
1,000km

SOUTH AMERICA

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

It must have been a dangerous journey across the open ocean. Imagine what they saw along the way! How long ago did they arrive? Look to see how far they travelled.



They survived the journey because they can live without food and water for many months!

It's all in the poo!

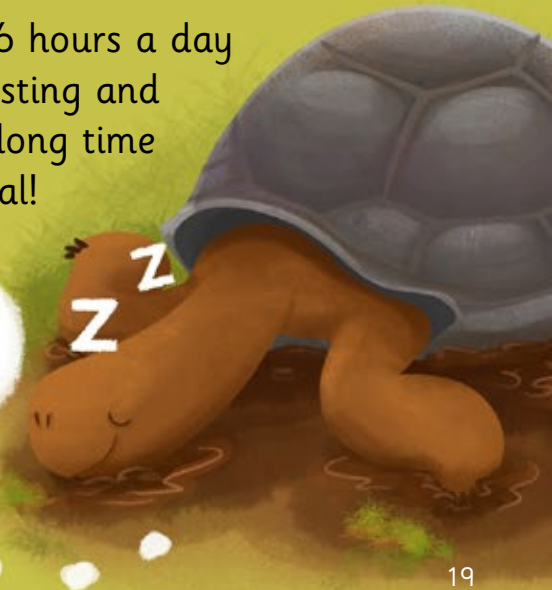
Giant tortoises are sometimes called 'Galapagos Gardeners.' This is because they spread or disperse seeds in their poo from the fruits they eat. Some of the seeds germinate when the tortoise poops them out!



Taking it easy

Giant tortoises spend up to 16 hours a day doing what they like best – resting and snoozing. After all, it takes a long time to digest all that plant material!

How long do you sleep for each day? Would you like to snooze the day away like a giant tortoise?



Meet the other species



Which species did you spot as you read the story? How many did you find?

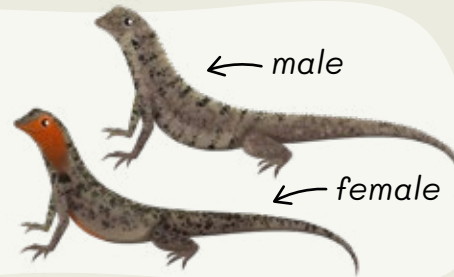
Each animal and plant has the name written in English, Spanish and Latin. Scientists across the world use Latin names.

Can you see each species is labelled as native or introduced?

N Native means it is a species that naturally lives in that area.

I Introduced means it is a species that does not naturally live in that place. Sometimes it can harm other wildlife.

Lava lizard **N**
Lagartija de lava
Microlophus spp.



Galapagos mockingbird **N**
Cucuve de Galápagos
Mimus parvulus

Medium ground finch **N**
Pinzón mediano de tierra
Geospiza fortis



Galapagos dove **N**
Paloma de Galápagos
Zenaida galapagoensis

Galapagos flycatcher **N**
Papamosca de Galápagos
Myiarchus magnirostris



Cattle egret **N**
Garza bueyera
Bubulcus ibis

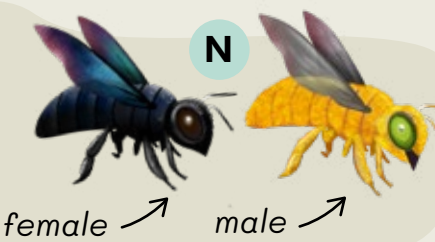


Smooth-billed ani **I**
Garrapatero
Crotophaga ani

Large painted locust **N**
Saltamontes pintado
Schistocerca melanocera



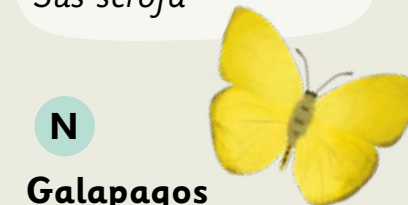
Galapagos carpenter bee **N**
Abeja carpintera de Galápagos
Xylocopa darwini



Little vermilion flycatcher **N**
Pájaro brujo
Pyrocephalus nanus

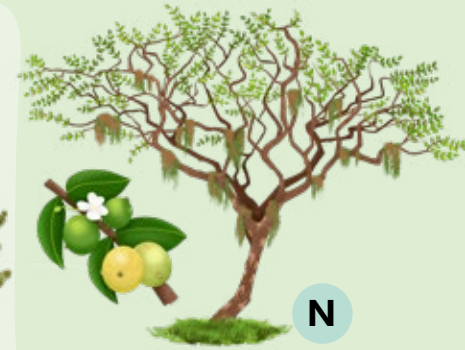


Pig **I**
Cerdo o chancho
Sus scrofa



Galapagos sulphur butterfly **N**
Mariposa azufre de Galápagos
Phoebis sennae marcellina

Prickly pear cactus **N**
Opuntia / Tuna
Opuntia spp.



Galapagos guava **N**
Guayabillo
Psidium galapagaeum

Passionfruit **I**
Maracuyá
Passiflora edulis



Blackberry **I**
Mora
Rubus niveus

Delicate violet orchid **N**
Orquídea
Ionopsis utricularioides

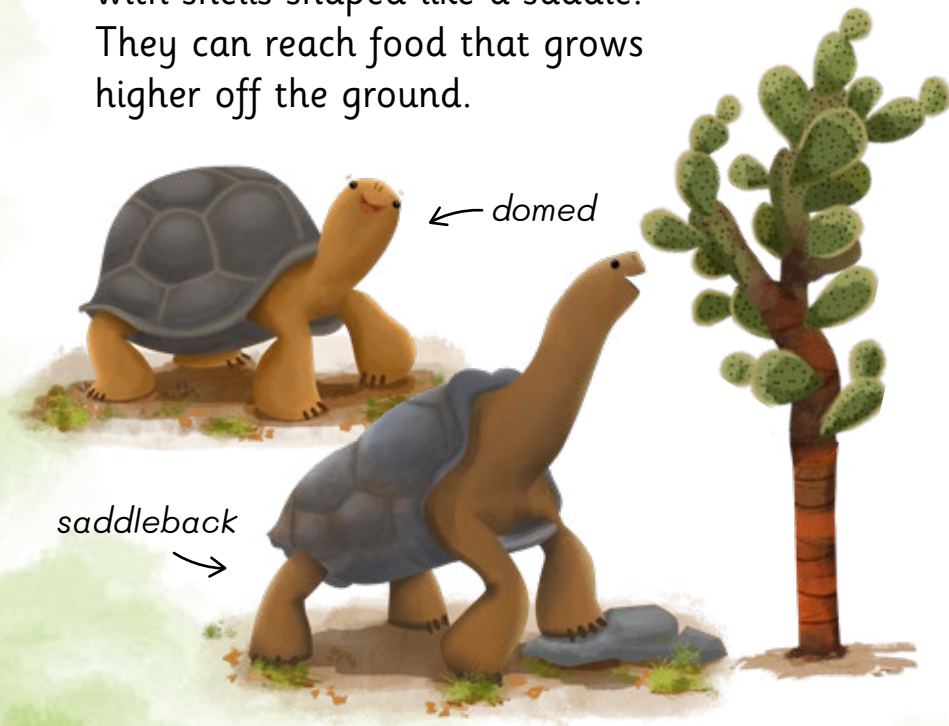


Glossary



Domed tortoise: is a tortoise that has a rounded shaped shell. Domed tortoises usually feed on plants close to the ground, where they don't need to reach their necks high for food.

There are also saddleback tortoises, with shells shaped like a saddle. They can reach food that grows higher off the ground.



Generation: is a group of animals born and living at about the same time. For example, you are from a different generation to your parents.

Hatchlings: are young animals that have just hatched from an egg. In our story, the hatchlings are baby tortoises.



Highlands: land closer to central and higher parts of an island where there is more rain and humid weather. Crops are often grown here.

Introduced: a plant or animal species which does not naturally live in that place. Sometimes it can harm other wildlife.

Lowlands: lower land closer to the ocean where there is less rain. It is usually dry and plants like cacti grow.

Mate: an animal's partner. Tessa finds a mate so that she can have babies.

Migration: when an animal moves from one place to another, usually to find food or a mate, and after a while it returns to its place of origin. This movement is usually repeated every year or season and the animals follow the same route.



Nesting spot: the area where female tortoises go to make nests and lay their eggs. The warm, soft and sandy soil in the lowlands is a perfect place to make them.

Protect: is to look after or keep something safe. In our story, the tortoise nests are protected by the Park Rangers.



Rainy season: from January to April in Galapagos there is more rainfall. This is called the rainy season.

Tag and track: Scientists use special tags they attach to animals. The tags help scientists see where and when the animals move, allowing the scientists to track the tortoises.



Trail: is like a path. Tortoises have followed the same routes on their migrations for so long you can sometimes see their paths or 'trails.'

Vegetation: is a word to describe plants that are found together in an area.

Working together



COMMUNITY

We help Park Rangers clear harmful introduced plants to make Tessa's journey easier and stop the plants spreading.

We make gaps in the fences in my farmland so Tessa can get through to reach the mud pools.

DRIVERS

We drive carefully so that Tessa can follow her migratory route and cross the road safely.

FARMERS

We dispose of litter properly. If we see any, we pick it up so that Tessa doesn't accidentally eat it or get tangled.

TOURISTS

By working together and looking after each other we can share **ONE HEALTH**

PARK RANGERS

We protect the nests from invasive predators such as pigs, so they don't eat the tortoise eggs.

SCIENTISTS

We attach special tags to hatchlings. This means we can track where they go and help protect them.

